1609/4838.

THE

Excellence of the Britiſh Conſtitution,

AND

THE EVIL OF CHANGING IT,

DEMONSTRATED,

In Two Sermons, preached at Peebles on the 10*th and* 17*th of March* 1793.

By WILLIAM DALGLIESH, D. D.

PUBLISHED BY DESIRE.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED FOR BELL & BRADFUTE, J. DICKSON, AND W. LAING.
1793.

1609/4888.

PROV. xxiv. 21.

My ſon, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change.

THESE were the words of the wiſe Solomon, king of Iſrael, and contain his beſt advice to every member of ſociety who would be good and happy. The Iſraelites were diſtinguiſhed above all nations. Their eſtabliſhments, religious and civil, were appointed by God, and admirably framed for the happineſs of his people. The illuſtrious family then on the throne had as yet exhibited the greateſt and the beſt princes that ever wore a crown. David, renowned for piety and valour, had ſubdued all their enemies abroad, and at home had eminently promoted religion and righteouſneſs. Solomon, celebrated for wiſdom and peace, had built a moſt magnificent temple for the worſhip of God; and by eſtabliſhing a navy, had brought fine gold in ſuperflowing abundance from Ophir, and made the riches of the ſurrounding world to center in Judea. For executing theſe deſigns of public utility, taxes were neceſſarily levied from the ſubjects, and, by the great influx of riches, they were well enabled to pay them. But amidſt all theſe bleſſings, ſome perſons were diſcontented with their condition, and meditated a change; when Solomon, to

caution men againſt joining with them in their evil deſigns, gave the excellent admonition contained in the text. *Fear the Lord and the king, and meddle not with changers*, as the original expreſſes it.

The good advice here given is of general uſe, and applies to Britiſh ſubjects with ſpecial propriety in the preſent juncture. Like the Iſraelites, we have long been bleſſed with true religion, liberty and proſperity; and have the beſt of kings, and the beſt civil Conſtitution on earth. Yet ſome diſaffected and ill deſigning men, by writings circulated, and aſſociations formed in every part of the kingdom, would have us believe, either that we have no Conſtitution; or that it is ſo eſſentially wrong or corrupted, that it muſt be totally changed; and have propoſed changes ſubverſive of it, contrary to juſtice, and to the eſtabliſhment of divine providence, and which would involve our happy country in ruin. In this alarming ſituation, it becomes all the friends of true religion and righteouſneſs, to ſhew the eſſential excellence of our Conſtitution, that all may ſee it; and to expoſe theſe changers, and the changes they have propoſed, in their true light, that their evil deſigns may be defeated. Like all things that are excellent, our Conſtitution, to be admired, needs only to be known; and the more every good man knows it, the more he will be attached to it.

On theſe principles, and with theſe views, I ſhall, agreeably to the deſign and diviſion of the text,—1. Shew the neceſſity and importance of religion, for the honour of God and the happineſs of man, and the excellence of our religious eſtabliſhment for anſwering theſe ends. 2. I ſhall repreſent the neceſſity of civil government for the virtue, good order and happineſs of ſociety, and the unequalled fitneſs of the Britiſh Conſtitution for all theſe purpoſes. 3. I ſhall demonſtrate, that the principles and propoſals of the leading changers are deſtructive of our excellent Conſtitution,

contrary

contrary to juſtice and the eſtabliſhment of divine providence, and ſubverſive of good order and happineſs in ſociety. 4. I ſhall conclude, by exhorting all to a proper ſenſe of our conſtitutional privileges, to a dutiful improvement of them, and a determined reſolution to defend them againſt every enemy.

I. I am to ſhew the neceſſity and importance of religion, for the honour of God and the happineſs of mankind, as individuals and members of ſociety, and the excellence of our religious eſtabliſhment for anſwering theſe ends.

Man is a rational creature of God, made for the honour of his Creator, his own happineſs, and that of his fellow creatures. Religion is the noble ſcience that directs us to theſe great ends of our exiſtence; and practical religion and virtue are the way in which we can attain them. Religion ſhews us our nature and ſtate, our relations to God, to our fellow creatures, and to that eternal world whither we are going, and both teaches us our duty in all theſe relations, and enforces the practice of it. With regard to God, it teacheth us a pious knowledge, belief, and recogniſance of him as our Creator, the God of our ſalvation, and our Sovereign Lord, and truſt in his mercy through the merits of the Saviour, all expreſſed by prayer and praiſe to him, and a conſcientious obſervance of his laws and ordinances. Making men pious and good, it, beyond any thing, has an influence to make them good members of ſociety. Wherever it is known and believed, it will teach parents to love their children, and to take care not only of their temporal but of their ſpiritual intereſts, and children to love, honour and obey their parents. It will teach maſters to be juſt and kind to their ſervants, and ſervants to be obedient and faithful to their maſters. It will teach kings and rulers, that they are the vicegerents of God, and that, like God, they ought to rule in righteouſneſs

and goodneſs. It will teach miniſters of religion to devote their time and talents to the great ends of their important office, the glory of God, and the inſtruction and ſalvation of men. And it will teach and diſpoſe the people, to love, honour and obey their teachers and rulers, as being all ordained of God for their good. In ſhort, religion is to individuals and ſocieties, the guide to righteouſneſs and the way to happineſs. It is the firſt and higheſt of all moral duties, and the great and only effectual principle of every other branch of moral righteouſneſs. Without religion, no perſon, no family, no ſociety, no nation, can be good and happy. But wherever true religion is known and practiſed, every virtue and every bleſſing will follow in her train.

This being the caſe, religion ever has been and ever muſt be the primary object and foundation of every wiſe and righteous and good conſtitution. Indeed, religion and good government mutually ſupport each other, and jointly contribute to the ſame great end, the virtue and the happineſs of man. When religion has had a legal eſtabliſhment, it has, in all nations, been more permanent, and more generally received. Where it wanted or loſt its national eſtabliſhment, it has, through the depravity of human nature, been weakened, and in ſome countries, has been entirely loſt. And no civil government ever exiſted or can exiſt for the good order or happineſs of man, but what laid religion as its proper baſis and ſecurity. Accordingly, when God ſettled a conſtitution to his people, the Iſraelites, he eſtabliſhed religion as the firſt and chief part of it, and the foundation of all the other laws, moral & political, which he preſcribed to them. All other legiſlators, Heathen, Mahometan, and Chriſtian, have made religion a principal part of their eſtabliſhments, and the baſis and ſecurity of their civil government. The religion eſtabliſhed in Britain is the true religion, and the beſt diſpenſation of true religion ever given

by

by God to man. It is the religion given to mankind from the beginning of the world by God himſelf and his prophets, as his divine wiſdom ſaw fit, perfected by Jeſus, his Son, our Saviour, and his apoſtles, and which, as gradually revealed, hath been the religion of the true church of God in every age. The forms of worſhip and of church government have been ſettled in each part of the united kingdom, as was moſt agreeable to the general body of the people. And to Chriſtians, who, in theſe things, may be of different ſentiments, that religious liberty is allowed, which the ſacred rights of conſcience and the peace of ſociety require.

It is with the eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment in this part of the united kingdom, that thoſe who live in it are more particularly concerned. And all who conſider it muſt ſee, that every part of it is admirably framed to promote religion, to the honour of God and the happineſs of man. Our public worſhip is ſcriptural, rational, ſpiritual, and edifying, reading and explaining the word of God in a more general way, called a lecture, and explaining and confirming the truths and enforceing the duties of religion, in the way of a ſermon, devout prayer and praiſe to God, and a ſolemn ſignifying and ſealing our compliance with his covenant in the holy ſacraments which he hath appointed for this purpoſe. Our form of church government is framed after the firſt and pureſt model of the primitive Chriſtian church, before it received additions either from the Chriſtian Emperors or from the Biſhops of Rome; and unites liberty with order, and parity with ſubordination, in the happieſt manner. As the time when men are taught religion with moſt advantage is youth, we have ſchools appointed in every pariſh, at which the young of both ſexes, beſides other branches of uſeful literature, are inſtructed in the firſt principles of religion. In different and proper places of the country, univerſities are eſtabliſhed, and are filled with able,

able, often with eminent Profeſſors, where all the branches of academical learning are taught, and where, like thoſe in the other learned and important profeſſions, the public teachers of religion muſt be regularly educated. Having finiſhed their courſe of education at the univerſity, candidates for the holy miniſtry muſt undergo ſtrict trials of their piety, learning, and orthodoxy, by the preſbytery in whoſe bounds they reſide, before they are licenced to preach the goſpel, and again by the preſbytery within whoſe bounds the pariſh, in which they are to be ſettled, lies, before they are ordained to their paſtoral office. By our eccleſiaſtical conſtitution, the call of the pariſhioners, as well as ordination by the preſbytery, is required to eſtabliſh the paſtoral relation between a miniſter and his people, and contributes much to their mutual affection and comfort. We have no miniſters of religion, but who have a paſtoral charge. Our paſtors muſt live with their flocks, and, while able, muſt do all the duties of their office in perſon. Beſides preſiding weekly in the ſacred ſervices of the church, our miniſters muſt annually catechiſe their pariſhioners for their inſtruction in the knowledge, and viſit them from houſe to houſe, to exhort them to the practice of religion and virtue: And, whenever they are called, they muſt be ready to comfort and pray with the ſick and the dying.

Our ſtipends are modified into money or victual out of the tythes of the pariſh, and therefore furniſh no bar to agricultural improvement, and no bone of contention between miniſters and their people. Though very moderate, they are more equally divided than in more opulent churches; and, as in a country of growing riches and expence of living, they muſt always be falling behind, the law has juſtly provided for their augmentation from time to time. In ſhort, of all the eſtabliſhed churches in Chriſtendom, there is none more adapted than ours, to all the great ends of a religious

ligious eſtabliſhment, and none that is ſo little burdenſome to the nation.

From this its natural tendency, and its experienced efficacy to promote religion and liberty, the Preſbyterian church government has ever been moſt agreeable to the great body of the people in Scotland, and ſo was eſtabliſhed at the Revolution, and confirmed at the Union of the two kingdoms. As one of the beſt evidences of its eſteemed excellence and general acceptableneſs, it needs only to be obſerved, that the far greateſt part of thoſe who have ſeparated from our eſtabliſhed church, retain her doctrine, her worſhip, her diſcipline and government; thus acknowledging the excellence of our eccleſiaſtical conſtitution, and ſeparating only from what they conſider as defections from it. Of theſe the power of patrons to preſent miniſters to vacant churches, reſtored by the 10th of Queen Ann, is confeſſedly the chief. Since the reſtoration of this unhappy law, ſome hundreds of thouſands of people have been induced to ſecede from the eſtabliſhed church, and are put to the otherwiſe unneceſſary burden of ſupporting a ſeparate clergy, to the hurt of their families, and of the improvement of the country. Piety to God, charity among Chriſtians, and peace in families, have often ſuffered. Diſaffection to government, to patrons, and the church, hath been excited; and the uſefulneſs of the eſtabliſhed clergy, both in a religious and political view, weakened.

With this exception, Government, ſince the Revolution, hath maintained the church of Scotland in all her rights and privileges, as then eſtabliſhed, and hath co-operated with her in promoting religion. Many laws have been enacted, and many royal proclamations made, againſt profaneneſs and immorality, and in favour of piety and virtue. Our gracious Sovereigns have given a thouſand pounds yearly to the General Aſſembly, to be laid out for promoting religion

in

in the Highlands and Iſlands. In 1709 the Society in Scotland for propagating Chriſtian Knowledge was incorporated by royal charter, and by the bleſſing of God, the laudable exertions of its members, and the liberal benefactions that have been made to it, has ſo remarkably proſpered, that at the ſchools ſupported by it in various parts of the kingdom, many thouſands of children are inſtructed in religion, virtue, and uſeful induſtry. I go on

II. To ſhew the neceſſity of Civil Government for the protection, good order and happineſs of ſociety. Man is not only a rational and moral creature, who owes to his Maker every duty of religion, but a ſocial creature, who derives much happineſs from ſociety, and who ought always to live with his fellow creatures, ſo as to promote the general good. In a ſolitary ſtate, man could ſcarcely exiſt; and in a ſocial ſtate, mankind, without civil government, could not be happy. There would be no regulations for general good order, and mutual aſſiſtance and defence; no ſecurity for life, liberty and property; few means of improvement, and fewer incitements to it; but, as is the caſe in the rude uncivilized ſtate of man, the artful would overreach the ſimple, the ſtrong would oppreſs the weak, and injuſtice and violence would fill the earth. To ſignify both the neceſſity of ſociety and of juſt ſubordination and good order for the happineſs of man, God, in the firſt form and model of it exhibited in families, hath ordained parents to inſtruct and govern, and children to learn and to obey. To ſhew the neceſſity of civil government in nations, and to ſet a proper example of it to man, the great Monarch of the univerſe, not only eſtabliſhed a civil Conſtitution to the Iſraelites, but preſided for ſome ages in the adminiſtration of it. Jehovah was Iſrael's king, as well as Iſrael's God. The tabernacle, in which reſided the glorious ſymbol of his preſence, was the palace in which he reigned, as well as the temple in which he was worſhipped.

Their

Their political laws he enacted as their King; their religion and its ordinances he appointed as their God. Moſes, Joſhua, and the judges were his miniſters in the civil government of his people: Aaron and his deſcendents were his miniſters in religion. When the Iſraelites aſked, and God gave them a king, he was to rule as the vicegerent of God, for the glory of God and the good of men, preſerving the true religion, and reigning agreeably to the righteous laws of God.

Theſe are the great ends and general laws of civil government, as declared and examplified by God himſelf; and the more every government is conformable to theſe, the more perfect it is. The ends of it muſt be the virtue and happineſs of ſociety, and its laws, the laws of moral righteouſneſs; which are the eternal laws of God's univerſal empire. To declare theſe laws, and accommodate them to the circumſtances of the ſtate, every government muſt poſſeſs a legiſlative and an executive power. The firſt requires knowledge, wiſdom, and juſtice, without which good laws cannot be enacted: the ſecond muſt be ſtrong and efficient, otherwiſe the beſt laws would be enacted in vain. To ſecure equitable laws, and an impartial adminiſtration of them, the legiſlative and executive powers muſt, in human governments, be veſted in different perſons. As whole nations cannot aſſemble to enact and to execute laws, they muſt delegate their powers of legiſlation to repreſentatives, choſen by them from the different orders in the ſtate, that the rights of all may be properly conſulted; and in every part of the country, judges muſt be appointed, who know the laws, and are authoriſed to put them in execution. As the laws are the laws of reaſon and righteouſneſs, which are the laws of God, it is the duty of all, both from political and moral obligation, conſcientiouſly to obſerve them. And as government, in all its branches, is eſtabliſhed for the protection, good order and happineſs of all, the expence neceſ-

 ſary

ſary for its ſupport, ought to be levied from all, but in proportion to their property thereby protected, and their ability to bear it.

The general forms of civil government for anſwering theſe important purpoſes have been three, monarchy, ariſtocracy, and democracy. Monarchy is the government of a nation by one man, who is called the King. Ariſtocracy is the government of a nation by the chief order in a ſtate, called Nobles. Democracy is the government of a nation by a number of rulers, choſen for that purpoſe from the common body of the people, which government is called a Republic. If kings, like God, were always wiſe, righteous and good, pure monarchy would, like that of God, be the beſt; as ſuch kings would never do evil, and would always have the greateſt power to do good. But in the preſent ſtate of human nature, in which the ſelfiſh prevail ſo generally over the ſocial principles, and elevation above others is ſo ready, by inſpiring vanity and pride, farther to corrupt the heart, the common tendency and conſequence of abſolute monarchy is deſpotiſm in the king, and oppreſſion of the ſubjects; witneſs the monarchies of Aſia and of Africa in all ages; witneſs Philip, Alexander, and his ſucceſſors in Greece and its empire; witneſs the kings of Rome, who became ſuch tyrants, that they were expelled from the government, and the emperors, who, ſo ſoon as they arrived at abſolute power, deſtroyed the authority of the ſenate and the liberties of the people; and witneſs every abſolute monarchy in Europe, notwithſtanding the influence of learning, philoſophy, and our moſt humane religion, to the preſent day. An ariſtocracy, as ſome one is commonly the chief in authority, and the reſt are conſtantly aſpiring to it, poſſeſſes all the deſpotiſm of monarchy on the one hand, and all the contention of democracy on the other; witneſs the tyranny and turbulence of the nobles in our own country, before they were brought under juſt control

by

by the acceſſion of our kings to greater power, and witneſs the nobility of Ruſſia and of Poland, when in ſimilar circumſtances. Democracy is naturally a feeble, contentious and tumultuary government, and often is as deſpotic and oppreſſive as the moſt abſolute monarchy; witneſs the ancient republics of Greece, under which, even their freemen often durſt not aſſert their liberty, and thoſe in power were in conſtant contention with one another, till they ruined the ſtate; and witneſs the republics of Carthage and of Rome, which were always torn with faction, not to mention thoſe which are lately formed.

Senſible of the imperfection and inconvenience of theſe different forms of government ſingly, mankind have often, more or leſs, conjoined them, and found great advantage in it. Thus monarchs have often ruled with the advice of their principal ſubjects. Nobles have often found it proper that the nobleman of chief abilities ſhould poſſeſs the chief influence. The Stadtholder in Holland, and the Preſident in the United States of America, though they have not the name, ſupply the place of a king, and give theſe popular governments a union and an energy they could not otherwiſe have. In a proper combination, therefore, of theſe various forms of civil government into one, muſt conſiſt the beſt conſtitution of government which the preſent condition of human nature admits. This was the decided opinion of the greateſt philoſophers and ſtateſmen which Greece or Rome produced, and while they lived under a republican government. So ſaid Socrates, as repreſented by Plato. "Of government there are three original kinds, that "of one, that of the nobility, and that of the people. "A monarchy limited by laws is the beſt of theſe "forms; but unlimited, it is the worſt, and very hard "on the ſubject. Ariſtocracy is of a middle kind. "A democracy is always of a weak conſtitution. It "is able to do neither great good nor evil, becauſe

" the power is ſcattered into ſo many hands. Hence " of all lawful governments, it is the worſt; and when " lawleſs, it is the beſt of ill governments. When " people are diſpoſed to be turbulent and miſchie- " vous, a lawleſs commonwealth is the beſt for them " to live in; and it is the worſt for thoſe who are " modeſt and ſober," *Plat. Dialog.* Plato for himſelf ſays, " There are two original forms of govern- " ment, pure royalty and pure democracy; but no " ſtate can poſſibly be quiet and happy where both " forms are not mixed. The conſtitutions of Crete " and Lacedemon, are in ſome reſpects regal, in ſome " ariſtocratical, and in ſome democratical; and theſe " are really political conſtitutions. One cauſe of the " diſorder and miſery of a ſtate is the imperfect forms " of government, democracy, oligarchy, or the abſo- " lute power of one, which are not governments but " ſyſtems of ſedition," *Plat. de Leg. lib.* 3, 4, 8. " And ſays Cicero, " I reckon it the beſt conſtitut- " ed government, which conſiſts of theſe three kinds, " that of a king, of the nobles, and of the people, " moderately mixed*."

This mixt and beſt conſtitution of government, admired and recommended by the ableſt philoſophers, and adopted by ſome of the wiſeſt ſtates, Great Britain has had the honour of completely adjuſting, and the happineſs to enjoy, above all nations. Several things contributed to this great acquiſition. Our inſular ſituation, rendering a great ſtanding army unneceſſary, gave leſs power to our kings, and more liberty to the people, than in kingdoms on the Continent. The nobles, in both parts of the iſland, checked the power of the king, and the leſſer barons and royal boroughs came to be a balance on both. Able politicians ſaw the excellence of a mixed government properly combined, and worthy patriots exerted themſelves

* " Statuo eſſe optime conſtitutam rempublicam, quæ ex hiſce " generibus tribus, regali, optimo et populari, n odice conſuſa."

ſelves to acquire it. The diſpoſition of kings to encroach on the liberties of the ſubjects, the turbulence of the nobles when they got greater power, and the deſpotiſm of the republic, while it exiſted, gave general conviction of the diſadvantages of every one of theſe forms of government by itſelf, and of the great advantage of blending them together. King James, degenerating into popery and tyranny, and attempting a total ſubverſion of the religion and liberties of the nation, rouſed a general concern for them; and having abdicated the throne and left the kingdom, gave the repreſentatives of the nation juſt cauſe to declare, that he had forfeited the crown, and an opportunity to raiſe the Conſtitution to higher perfection, and to guard their rights againſt ſuch encroachment and danger in time to come. Under juſt limitations, they tendered the crown to William and Mary, who was the next Proteſtant branch of the royal family, which being accepted, the ſolemn compact was ratified, and, by the conſent of all concerned, the conſtitution of Great Britain, in its perfected form, was confirmed for ever. This took place in the year 1688, and is juſtly ſtiled the Glorious Revolution.

By this our excellent Conſtitution, the true Chriſtian religion is unalterably eſtabliſhed, and the national churches confirmed in all their rights. The laws of righteouſneſs, contained in the word of God and in the civil laws of the land, ſecuring the life, the liberty and property of all, are declared the fundamental laws of the kingdom. The government is veſted in the King, Lords and Commons, with proper powers for preſerving and improving the Conſtitution, by the enactment of laws agreeable to it, and tending to encreaſe the happineſs of the nation. To prevent the turbulence and danger inſeparably attendant on elective monarchy, the crown is made hereditary. Yet the king muſt always be of the true reformed religion, muſt marry one of the true

religion,

religion, muſt protect the true religion, and the church as by law eſtabliſhed, and muſt preſerve the Conſtitution, and reign agreeably to its laws. As the conſtitutional head of the great body politic, the king is veſted with all the honours and powers of royalty, has a proper ſhare of the legiſlative authority, the execution of the laws, and nomination of the judges; the appointment of officers and commanders of the army and navy, for the defence of the kingdom, and the power of conferring honours for the encouragement and reward of eminent exertions for the general good. The nobles, raiſed by their virtues, their opulence and rank, next to the king, have their privileges and juſt ſhare in the government; and act, both as a bond of union between the King and the Commons, and as a balance againſt the exorbitant power of either. To preſerve the dignity of the nobles, the honour of nobility is reſtricted to the eldeſt ſon of the family: and to cement their union and friendſhip with the Commons, the younger children rank with the latter, and the two orders intermary at pleaſure. As the Commons, in all nations, are by far the greateſt part of the ſtate, and conſiſt of two general claſſes, landholders and burgeſſes, both have their juſt repreſentation and ſhare in the government. That the deliberations of the Lords and Commons may be more independent and free, and as both poſſeſs certain conſtitutional powers peculiar to themſelves, they form diſtinct Houſes of Parliament. The Houſe of Lords is compoſed of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, including the twelve Chief Judges of England, all of them perſons of the firſt learning and knowledge of the conſtitution and laws, and ſo is the Supreme Civil Court in the kingdom, to which appeals from the inferior Courts may be brought. The Houſe of Commons, as repreſentatives of the great body of the people, and particular guardians of their rights, have the ſole power of laying the taxes, which

are juſtly laid on all, as all partake of the bleſſings of government, but laid ſo as to fall heavieſt on the rich, and to affect more the luxuries than the neceſſaries of life. To preſerve a proper connection between the people and their delegates, and yet give time to their delegates to know the intereſts of the kingdom, and more ſteadily to purſue them, the Parliaments are made ſeptennial; but may be ſhortened, and a new one called by the King, when occaſions require it. Before any law can be enacted, it muſt have the ſanction of every part of the Legiſlature, King, Lords, and Commons. That it may have their moſt mature deliberation, it muſt, by permiſſion, be brought in as a bill, read at three ſeveral times in both Houſes, and having been approved by them both, muſt next be carried to the King and receive the royal aſſent. If, after all, any law ſhould paſs, by which any think themſelves agrieved, they have a right to petition Government for a repeal of it. Or if Government ſhould themſelves be ſenſible that any law ought to be repealed, or any new one enacted for the greater perfection of the Conſtitution and the happineſs of the people, they have the power of doing ſo. From this neceſſary part of our excellent Conſtitution, and the virtue of Government as the legal adminiſtrators of it, not a reign has paſt, ſince its happy eſtabliſhment, but ſome law hath been enacted for the greater liberty and happineſs of the ſubjects. Such is the Act of Grace, under William and Mary, in behalf of debtors; the Act of Toleration, under Anne, in favour of religious liberty; the Act of George I. freeing Vaſſa's from perſonal ſervices exacted by their Superiors; the Act of George II. aboliſhing ward-holdings and heritable juriſdictions, and eſtabliſhing, in every county in Scotland, Sheriffs learned in the law, with proper ſalaries from Government. Under the reign of his preſent Majeſty, whom God long preſerve, Judges are appointed for life; and revenue officers excluded

from

religion, muſt protect the true religion, and the church as by law eſtabliſhed, and muſt preſerve the Conſtitution, and reign agreeably to its laws. As the conſtitutional head of the great body politic, the king is veſted with all the honours and powers of royalty, has a proper ſhare of the legiſlative authority, the execution of the laws, and nomination of the judges; the appointment of officers and commanders of the army and navy, for the defence of the kingdom, and the power of conferring honours for the encouragement and reward of eminent exertions for the general good. The nobles, raiſed by their virtues, their opulence and rank, next to the king, have their privileges and juſt ſhare in the government; and act, both as a bond of union between the King and the Commons, and as a balance againſt the exorbitant power of either. To preſerve the dignity of the nobles, the honour of nobility is reſtricted to the eldeſt ſon of the family: and to cement their union and friendſhip with the Commons, the younger children rank with the latter, and the two orders intermary at pleaſure. As the Commons, in all nations, are by far the greateſt part of the ſtate, and conſiſt of two general claſſes, landholders and burgeſſes, both have their juſt repreſentation and ſhare in the government. That the deliberations of the Lords and Commons may be more independent and free, and as both poſſeſs certain conſtitutional powers peculiar to themſelves, they form diſtinct Houſes of Parliament. The Houſe of Lords is compoſed of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, including the twelve Chief Judges of England, all of them perſons of the firſt learning and knowledge of the conſtitution and laws, and ſo is the Supreme Civil Court in the kingdom, to which appeals from the inferior Courts may be brought. The Houſe of Commons, as repreſentatives of the great body of the people, and particular guardians of their rights, have the ſole power of laying the taxes, which

are

are juſtly laid on all, as all partake of the bleſſings of government, but laid ſo as to fall heavieſt on the rich, and to affect more the luxuries than the neceſſaries of life. To preſerve a proper connection between the people and their delegates, and yet give time to their delegates to know the intereſts of the kingdom, and more ſteadily to purſue them, the Parliaments are made ſeptennial; but may be ſhortened, and a new one called by the King, when occaſions require it. Before any law can be enacted, it muſt have the ſanction of every part of the Legiſlature, King, Lords, and Commons. That it may have their moſt mature deliberation, it muſt, by permiſſion, be brought in as a bill, read at three ſeveral times in both Houſes, and having been approved by them both, muſt next be carried to the King and receive the royal aſſent. If, after all, any law ſhould paſs, by which any think themſelves agrieved, they have a right to petition Government for a repeal of it. Or if Government ſhould themſelves be ſenſible that any law ought to be repealed, or any new one enacted for the greater perfection of the Conſtitution and the happineſs of the people, they have the power of doing ſo. From this neceſſary part of our excellent Conſtitution, and the virtue of Government as the legal adminiſtrators of it, not a reign has paſt, ſince its happy eſtabliſhment, but ſome law hath been enacted for the greater liberty and happineſs of the ſubjects. Such is the Act of Grace, under William and Mary, in behalf of debtors; the Act of Toleration, under Anne, in favour of religious liberty; the Act of George I. freeing Vaſſa's from perſonal ſervices exacted by their Superiors; the Act of George II. aboliſhing ward-holdings and heritable juriſdictions, and eſtabliſhing, in every county in Scotland, Sheriffs learned in the law, with proper ſalaries from Government. Under the reign of his preſent Majeſty, whom God long preſerve, Judges are appointed for life; and revenue officers excluded

from

from having a vote in the election of persons to serve in Parliament. The practice of voting for members of Parliament on fictitious titles, has received a just check from the Courts of Law, and is in the train of being restricted by Government to its just and Constitutional ground. And the abolition of the African slave trade is brought before Parliament, and will, it is hoped, distinguish the reign of the first British-born Prince of the illustrious House of Hanover, and diffuse liberty and happiness, not only through every part of the British empire, but beyond it, to the other regions of the globe.

Such is the nature and excellence of our Civil Constitution, not wrong in its principles and construction, but the wisest, the best, the most perfect on earth, containing a selection of what is good in all simple forms of government, and an admirable combination of them for the greater happiness of man: not essentially degenerated, but improved and improving; a Constitution of Government the most free, yet most firm, the most equal, yet energetic, which human wisdom has ever been able to devise, or any nation or age hath exhibited, possessing the vigour of Monarchy, without its despotism; the wisdom of Aristocracy, without its turbulence, and the equity of Democracy, without its weakness and confusion. The ablest philosophers and statesmen in the surrounding world, have admired and extolled it. Every nation, that has had their liberty to choose, has wished to adopt it. The United States of America, in their President, their Supreme Council and House of Representatives, adopted the general form of our Government, so far as their present condition admits. Poland lately formed her Government in a King, Lords and Commons, after the British model, and had it not been for the unjust interference of her despotic neighbours, would have had the happiness to have preserved it. And the first and best National Assembly of France wished to reform their Absolute Monarchy after the Constitution

tution of this country, in King, Lords and Commons, had not the uncomplying Princes, Nobles and leading Clergy, defeated their wiſe deſign.

But as the unparallelled excellence of the Britiſh Conſtitution is obvious in theory, ſo it hath been amply proved in fact. It is more than a century ſince it was eſtabliſhed in its proper perfection. It hath been tried in actual experiment, and hath ſtood the teſt, anſwering all the ends of civil government, in a higher degree, than any other civil conſtitution upon earth. The prerogative of the Crown, and the privileges of the people clearly defined, and the line clearly drawn between them, there has been no encroachment on each other as in former times. Both holding their rights by the ſame Conſtitution, it is the intereſt, and has been the care of both to preſerve it. Both combined for their mutual happineſs, never has the King invaded the rights of the people, nor the people the rights of their King, but they have lived together in mutual affection and good offices. Never has the cruel hand of oppreſſion or perſecution been felt, nor its voice been ſo much as heard in our happy land, ſince that bliſsful Æra of the Revolution: But, like the Iſraelites, who ſat every man under his own vine and his own fig tree, every peaceable Britiſh ſubject enjoys full protection in his perſon and religion, liberty and property, and has none to make him afraid. Under the benign influence of our free and happy Conſtitution, learning and ſcience, theological, moral, phyſical, and political, and ingenious and uſeful arts, agriculture, manufacture and commerce, have been carried to a degree of perfection never known before. So that from the firſt exiſtence of the name and nation of Britain, under whatever people, or kings, never did the Iſland enjoy ſuch a free, yet firm Conſtitution, never ſo mild a Government, never ſuch juſt laws and ſuch regular judges, never ſuch liberty, religious and civil, never ſuch internal peace proſperity and happineſs.

SERMON II.

PROV. xxiv. 21.

My ſon, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change.

MEN often enjoy the moſt diſtinguiſhed bleſſings, without being duly ſenſible of them. The two greateſt bleſſings a nation can enjoy, are a good religious and civil eſtabliſhment, the firſt being conducive to their ſpiritual, the ſecond to their temporal happineſs. The Conſtitution of Britain, like that of the Iſraelites, is peculiarly adapted to both theſe purpoſes. But as ſome perſons in Iſrael, even under the peaceful and proſperous reign of Solomon, were inſenſible of their bleſſings, and wiſhed for a change, ſo it is with ſome in Britain, notwithſtanding the moſt excellent Conſtitution, and the juſt and mild Government, under which we have the happineſs to live. Having delineated the excellence of our Conſtitution, religious and civil, I proceed

III. To ſhew, that the principal changes propoſed to be made on it, in place of improving, are totally deſtructive of it, contrary to juſtice, and to the general eſtabliſhment of Divine Providence, and ſubverſive of good order and the happineſs in ſociety.

Who then are the chief projectors of the changes propoſed? what are their principles, what their characters,

racters, religious and political? Some of them are Socinians, who deny all the peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity, the Holy Trinity, the incarnation of the Divine Word, our redemption by his atoning blood, our juſtification to eternal life by his perfect righteouſneſs, and our ſanctification by the Holy Spirit; and, who ſeeing our eſtabliſhment a bar to the general reception of their principles, wiſh it to be removed. Some of them are republicans, and enemies to Monarchy, not thinking that God's government of the whole world is a Monarchy, not recollecting that the government he examplified and inſtituted to the Iſraelites was a Monarchy; and not conſidering, that our Monarchy is not that arbitrary, deſpotic, and perſecuting Monarchy which, perhaps, their forefathers felt, and of which their fathers have told them, but a Monarchy limited by law, and balanced by a great and powerful repreſentation of the ſubjects, a mixed Government, that is as much a Democracy as a Monarchy, a Government which never did perſecute, and while its conſtitutional principles and laws continue, never can. Others of them are diſcontented, factious and deſigning men, who would hazard all the beſt intereſts of mankind to promote their own. And all of them, from one principle or another, are enemies to our Conſtitution and Government, and wiſh for a change of it.

But what are the changes they have propoſed? Have they, as the friends of true religion, propoſed means for diffuſing more extenſively the knowledge, belief and practice of it among all ranks of men; a more ſacred reverence of God and of his holy name, a more univerſal ſanctification of the Sabbath, a more regular attendance on the ordinances of religion, a more ſteady execution of the laws againſt profaneneſs and immorality, and a reformation, in our eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, of whatever is a defection from the Conſtitution, and hurtful to religion? No. Religion,

though infinitely the higheſt concern of man, is but too little the general care. To revive the ſpirit and promote the intereſt of genuine Chriſtianity, might be leſs expected from ſome of the leading changers. But among the many ſerious and well-meaning perſons, who, in every part of the kingdom, have been drawn into their aſſociations, it is indeed ſurpriſing, and very little to their honour, that a motion favourable to religion has never once been made and adopted.

Had they, as friends to our civil Conſtitution, propoſed that venality and corruption ſhould be more effectually checked, that the election of perſons to ſerve in Parliament ſhould be perfectly free, and that the qualifications for electing or being elected members for counties, ſhould be founded in real landed property, this would have been only keeping the practice to the principles and laws of the Conſtitution. Or had they propoſed a renewed application to Government for the immediate abolition of the African ſlave trade, which is plainly a violation of every law of God, and of every right of man, contrary, in its nature, to the Chriſtian and free ſpirit of the Britiſh Conſtitution, and, as carried on, is contrary to expreſs law, which, under the penalty of L.100 ſterling for every ſingle offence, prohibits all Britiſh ſubjects to purchaſe any perſon on the African coaſt as a ſlave, but ſuch as are proved, by their evil practices, to have juſtly forfeited their life or their liberty; this would have ſhewed them to be real friends to their country, and to the human race.

But theſe are not the objects of the preſent changers; for reformers, they cannot in truth, or in any propriety of language, be called. Their object is not the reformation of our Conſtitution, but its deformation; not its preſervation and improvement, but its deſtruction. Their language is, No King, no Nobles, no Parliament, no Clergy. Say, Chriſtians, ſay, Britons, what ſchemes can be meditated more wicked, more

contrary

contrary to the laws of God, the rights of men, and the happineſs of our country in Church and State? The Britiſh Conſtitution is founded on the true religion of the true God and our Saviour, and the eternal laws of moral righteouſneſs, which are the laws of God, and in theſe its fundamental principles, it, like the government of God, is immutable. Its eſtabliſhments, religious and civil, ſo far as conſonant to theſe principles, and peculiarly conducive to the honour of God and the happineſs of man, from their moral obligation cannot, and from their political expediency, ought not to be changed. And being ſolemnly contracted to, and ratified by all parties concerned; for any one party to violate the contract, without conſent of the others, were a flagrant violation of faith and juſtice. In ſtates to be formed, men may be at liberty to chooſe whatever form of government they think beſt. Or if the form choſen ſhould be found not to anſwer the great ends of it, it may, by general conſent, be altered or exchanged for a better one. But our election has been made, and is the very beſt we could have made. The great national compact, including our Conſtitution, religious and civil, and ſecuring to all concerned their conſtitutional rights, has been maturely conſidered, approved and ratified. The church has been eſtabliſhed agreeably to the word of God, and the general wiſh of the people; and can any who regard the honour of our God and Saviour, and the beſt intereſts of man, wiſh to deſtroy it? The King has done nothing to forfeit his conſtitutional right to the Crown; but by his eminent piety, his moſt virtuous and exemplary conduct, and his conſtitutional government, has done every thing to confirm it. The Houſes of Parliament have done nothing to forfeit their conſtitutional rights, but have done many good offices for the welfare of the country. Were government to violate the Conſtitution, and to invade the conſtitutional rights of the ſubjects, the ſubjects,

by

by the Conſtitution, would be entitled to defend them: But when government, in place of invading, protects the rights of the people, it would be the higheſt wickedneſs and madneſs in the people to invade theirs. The ſcripture confirms theſe dictates of reaſon, and enforces theſe duties of moral righteouſneſs, by the higheſt of all authorities, the authority of God. *Render to Ceſar*, ſays Chriſt, *the things which are Ceſar's, and to God the things that are God's*, Matth. xxii. 21. *Let every ſoul be ſubject unto the higheſt powers*, ſays Paul, *for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the ordinance of God; and they that reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves damnation. For he is the miniſter of God to thee for good. Wherefore ye muſt needs be ſubject, not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake.—Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, cuſtom to whom cuſtom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour*, Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7. And if in all things lawful, ſubmiſſion and obedience were the duty of Chriſtians to heathen, how much more are they our duty to the Chriſtian rulers under which we have the peculiar felicity to live?

But what is the form of government which the preſent projectors of a revolution wiſh to eſtabliſh, and what are the advantages they hold forth as to be obtained from it? Theſe things they have not always clearly defined, and not a little artifice is ſhewed in not too clearly defining them. Like their friends the Deiſts and Socinians, who have long cavilled at the true religion of Jeſus, without being able to propoſe another more worthy of God, or ſo ſalutary to man; ſo the preſent changers wiſh for ſome kind of republic, as being more agreeable to their principles and their views. But their primary object is to prejudiſe the people againſt the preſent Conſtitution, and excite them to deſtroy it, when they would raiſe another

more

more agreeable to their mind, and themſelves, no doubt, as near to the top of it as poſſible. With theſe views, like their brethren and aſſociates in France, they talk of liberty, but forget that they live in the land of liberty, where every man enjoys full freedom to do all the good to others, and get all the good to himſelf, in the ways of righteouſneſs, that lies in his power. This is the true liberty of a rational and moral being. This is the liberty which God himſelf approves and practices. This is the liberty which all good men will approve and practice: Like David, they will ſay, and ſay juſtly, *I will walk at liberty, for I ſeek God's precepts*, Pſ. cxix. 45. For all other liberty, a freedom to be evil and to do evil, is not liberty but licentiouſneſs, and what none but evil beings, devils and wicked men, can wiſh or practice.

But equality is the grand object they hold out, and is well adapted for miſleading thoſe whom they chiefly expect to draw into their deſigns. But what do they mean by equality? If they mean by it the common unalienable rights of our nature, the rights of reaſon and conſcience, equal acceſs to true religion and the bleſſings of it, all theſe we have, and to ſecure and improve theſe is the very firſt object of our excellent Conſtitution. Do they mean equal protection by the laws in life and property? this is the next great object of our Conſtitution, and what every ſubject has equally with the Sovereign. Do they mean equal liberty to chooſe their line of life, and equal acceſs to every place of uſefulneſs, honour or emolument? our Conſtitution, wholly formed for the liberty and happineſs of man, wiſely allows all to follow the direction of their own judgement and the bent of their own inclination in chooſing their buſineſs or office; and to encourage genius and exertion in all, for their own intereſt and the public good, throws open to all every office and employment in Church and State, to which their diſpoſition leads, and for which

which their abilities qualify them. Do they by equality mean an equal diviſion of property, as ſome of their diſciples have imagined? This, in the partition of a country, or of riches diſcovered, or acquired equally by all, would be juſt; though, from the different talents and exertions of the individuals, the equality would not long exiſt. But in a nation, where lands and goods have, by the different talents and induſtry of its inhabitants, been acquired in different proportions, or, by juſt deſtination, have been conveyed to their heirs, a propoſal for equalization of property, were a proclamation of univerſal rapine and pillage, which muſt begin with injuſtice, be maintained by oppreſſion. Or finally, do they mean, like their brethren in France, to aboliſh all ſuperior orders in the ſtate, as their expreſſions, No King, no Nobles, plainly ſignify, and to reduce all ranks of men to one common level, this would be contrary to juſtice, contrary to the general eſtabliſhment of God in nature and providence, and to the good order and happineſs of ſociety. Would they, as philoſophers, ſtudy the works of God, they would find a variety of ſpecies, and a juſt gradation in every claſs of beings, he hath made. Or, would they conſider the arrangements of his providence, they would ſee diſtinct orders and offices among his creatures, giving them greater utility, cloſer connection and firmer union, and that theſe wiſe eſtabliſhments of God contribute not only to his greater glory, but to the greater good of his creatures. Thus the material univerſe is a grand combination of different ſyſtems. In this ſyſtem to which our earth belongs, the glorious luminary, the ſun, poſſeſſes the center; the planets are ſome primary, revolving round the ſun; ſome ſecondary, revolving round the primary, all different from one another in their magnitudes, in their orbits, in their velocities, and their periods of revolution; yet all their variety is conducive to the general order and uſefulneſs. In the purely

purely ſpiritual world there are angels and archangels, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers. Among men there is great diverſity of genius and diſpoſition in the individual, diverſity of order in the conſtitution of families; and there was a diverſity of orders in the church and kingdom of Iſrael, both of them formed by God himſelf; yet all this diverſity is neceſſary to the greater good of the whole. Would they, as men, attend to the common ſenſe and reaſon of men, they would hear all mankind calling a regular ſociety, from the uſeful variety, arrangement and connection of its members, a corporation, or body politic. Would they, as Chriſtians, liſten to the word of God, they would hear the church deſcribed as the body of Chriſt, and the propriety, neceſſity and advantage of different orders and offices, clearly affirmed. *If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the ſmelling? But now hath God ſet the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleaſed him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? And the eye cannot ſay unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you*, 1 Cor. xii. 17,—20. Or would they, as politicians, view the United States of America on the Weſt, they would ſee them like a body juſt organized and in its infant ſtate, where the rulers and judges being much on a level with the people, have not ſufficient power to adminiſter the Government and execute the laws with authority; where the equality of the parts enfeebles the whole; and, if it is not nurſed by able and prudent men encreaſing the energy of its government, and the union of its parts, in proportion to the increaſe and power of its people, it muſt be weak, and liable to diſorder and diſſolution. Or would our republicans and levellers impartially look over to France on the Eaſt, they would ſee their principles of equalization moſt completely refuted, in the experiments made there to put

them in practice. For, by weakening too much the power of the King and his miniſters, like a human body, in which the head and whole nervous and muſcular ſyſtem is diſordered and weakened by a paralytic ſhock, their monarchial government was firſt convulſed; and when afterwards the head was cut off, all became convulſion, anarchy and miſery. The political is like the human body; it can be equalized only by reducing it to its firſt principles, and who does not ſee, that ſuch a diſorganization of both, is their deſtruction and death. Or let them candidly conſider the Britiſh Conſtitution, government and kingdom, and they will ſee it a body not only properly organized, but all its parts poſſeſſing a juſt degree of political ſtrength, each diſcharging its functions with the juſt powers belonging to it, and all contributing to the general good. Abſolutely perfect it is not, and never can be. All human Conſtitutions are the works of man, and muſt partake, in ſome degree, of the imperfection of man. Were they even in every part of them, like that of Iſrael, the appointment of God, yet as the adminiſtration of them is in the hands of men, it muſt, like that of the Iſraelites, be liable to human infirmities and imperfections. This detracts not, however, from its high excellence, eſſential and comparative, and ſhould not detract from the eſteem of it we ſhould have. The ſun has his ſpots, which philoſophers have obſerved, but by whom was their inconveniency ever felt, or who, for this reaſon, ever wiſhed him annihilated? The healthieſt human conſtitutions have often ſome little weakneſſes; but would any man in his right mind, therefore, propoſe to deſtroy them? No man is perfect himſelf, and no reaſonable man will expect abſolute perfection in others. Our conſtitution is greatly more perfect than any who live under it, and thoſe, commonly, who fall fartheſt ſhort of it, are the readieſt to find fault. Its imperfections are ſo few and ſmall,

compared

compared with its perfections, that its friends need not be aſhamed of them; and it has, within itſelf, ſo much the power of remedy, that its beſt friends will never conceal, but candidly acknowledge them, and, in a conſtitutional way, wiſh them to be corrected. Our greateſt defects lie not in our Conſtitution, but in our departure from it, and therefore our true reform is a general return to its excellent ſpirit, and dutiful obſervance of its righteous laws: which brings me

IV. As the proper application of the ſubject, to exhort all to a juſt ſenſe of our conſtitutional bleſſings, to a dutiful improvement of them, and a determined reſolution to defend them againſt every enemy.

1. Let all, by an impartial conſideration of our Conſtitution, and of the happineſs, which, under God, we derive from it, be duly ſenſible of its eſſential and unparalleled excellence. With this view, I have given you a fair delineation of it, in all its eſſential parts. But things of ſuperlative excellence diſplay moſt clearly their ſuperiority, when they are brought into compariſon with others. Look then, Britons, at every nation in the ſurrounding world; compare them with your own, in religion, in government, in liberty, and proſperity, and learn from the compariſon your unexampled happineſs. Look eaſtward, and ſee France, long the ſeat of deſpotic monarchy and Romiſh ſuperſtition, violently changed into a republic, more lawleſs and tyrannical: ſee Italy, great part of Germany, Auſtria, and Poland, ſtill fettered in the errors, idolatry and ſuperſtition of Popery: ſee Turkey, and every Empire in Aſia, enſlaved by the impoſture of Mahomet, or by the ignorance and idolatry of heatheniſm, ſupported by unlimited and deſpotic monarchy. Look weſtward, and ſee almoſt all America the ſeat of Paganiſm and Popery, except thoſe parts of it which have been, or are connected with this land of true religion and liberty. Look northward, and ſee almoſt every nation ſubjected to deſpotic government; and their kings fearful of

nothing ſo much, as that their abſolute power ſhould be brought under reaſonable limitation. And look ſouthward, and ſee Spain and Portugal, ſtill ſo enſlaved by the ignorance and tyranny of Popery, as to ſupport their ſuperſtition by the terrors of the Inquiſition: or beyond theſe extend your view over Africa, and, Abyſſinia excepted, behold every kingdom involved in heathen darkneſs, or the deluſions of Mahomet; their kings deſpotic; and ſome of them ſuch monſters of inhumanity, that when they wiſh for money, they, in the dead hour of night, with an armed force, ſurround and ſet fire to their towns and villages, ſeize their unoffending ſubjects, drive them, in hundreds and thouſands, to the ſhore, like cattle to a market, and ſell them for ſlaves.

Or compare Great Britain with itſelf in former ages, and learn the peculiar bleſſings which you now enjoy. Once was Britain, like other nations, the ſeat of heathen ignorance, idolatry and barbariſm; now it is the ſeat, the favourite ſeat, of learning, of true religion, and of all the bleſſings of civilized life. Once was Britain, like other parts of the world, in the firſt ages, divided into ſmaller kingdoms, and was the ſcene of frequent depredation, war and miſery; now it exiſts as one great nation, bleſſed with peace at home, and reſpected and revered by all the world. Once was it, like other nations in Europe, miſerably enſlaved under the ſpiritual domination and ſuperſtition of Popery; now it is bleſſed with the true religion of the great God and our Saviour, in all its original purity and perfection. Often, by arbitrary and bigotted kings, and their evil counſellors in Church and State, were your pious forefathers, for their ſacred regard to true religion aud liberty, cruelly oppreſſed and perſecuted, baniſhed their native country, ſpoiled of their goods, ſhut up in loathſome priſons, and cut off by cruel deaths; now all may worſhip God according to their conſcience, as directed by God's word, and there is

none

none to moleſt them. Happy Britons! thrice happy in all the bleſſings of religion, liberty and proſperity; and happy muſt every Briton feel, who knows his happineſs. While moſt other nations ſit in darkneſs, you enjoy the light of life. While moſt other nations are the ſlaves of tyranny, and depend for all that is dear to them on the will of their ſovereign, you live under a free and legal government, ſecuring to you whatever is neceſſary to your happineſs in this life, and in the life which is to come. Truly may I addreſs you, as Moſes did Iſrael, when he foreſaw them dwelling *in ſafety alone*, and enjoying all the bleſſings of the good land which God had promiſed them. *Happy art thou, O Iſrael, who is like unto thee, O people ſaved by the Lord, the ſhield of thy help, and who is the ſword of thy excellency; and thine enemies ſhall be found liars unto thee, and thou ſhalt tread upon their high places*, Deut. xxxiii. 29. Like Judea in the middle of the Eaſtern Continent, in the days of Solomon, Great Britain riſes between the two Continents, in our happy times, the light and glory of the world, the diſtinguiſhed region of the beſt religion, and of the beſt civil government upon earth, and the model held up for both to the ſurrounding nations. Like Judea in the days of Solomon, we have a navy and foreign trade; but much greater than Solomon's, greater than any of the greateſt commercial nations, ancient or modern; a navy containing no fewer than twenty-four thouſand ſhips of trade and of war to protect them, carrying our commerce to every quarter of the globe, rendering Great Britain the Empreſs of the Ocean, and the mart of the world, and making the riches of all nations to center in Britain: And if our taxes, like thoſe exacted of the Iſraelites in Solomon's days, are increaſed, all claſſes, by our increaſed, and yearly increaſing riches, are not only enabled to pay them with greater eaſe, but to acquire more opulence, and live more comfortably, than in former times.

2. Sen-

1. Senſible of our diſtinguiſhed privileges, religious and civil, let us make the proper improvement of them in all piety to God, loyalty and ſubjection to government, and a faithful diſcharge of our duty, as members of ſociety. Much eſteem is due to thoſe great and good men, who, at the hazard or expence of their fortunes or their lives, planned and executed our admirable Conſtitution. May their names be had in everlaſting remembrance. May their virtues diſtinguiſh their offſpring, and be admired and imitated by Britons, while Britain and the world do exiſt. But God is the Father of lights from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. He it was, who in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity bleſſed our happy iſle with the light of the goſpel. He it was, who at the Reformation delivered us from the errors and ſuperſtitions of Popery, and reſtored our religion to its original purity. And he it was, who at the Revolution reſcued us from Popery, ſlavery, and arbitrary power, enabled our patriotic forefathers to perfect our Conſtitution, and hath preſerved it. To God, the giver of all good, our Creator, our Preſerver, and the God of our ſalvation, our higheſt regards are ever due. Let us reverence and adore his infinite greatneſs. Let us love and praiſe him for his infinite goodneſs. Let us thankfully comply with his goſpel, and obſerve all his ordinances and laws.

Let us love and obey our moſt excellent King, who hath made the honour of God, and the happineſs of his ſubjects, the conſtant aim, and the laws of God and of the kingdom, the conſtant rule of his government. Long may the crown flouriſh on his head; and be tranſmitted through a race of Proteſtant ſucceſſors, deſcending from him, and inheriting his piety and virtues, to lateſt poſterity. Long may he and our amiable Queen, live the bright examples of all moral excellence to their children and their ſubjects, beloved by all, and imitated by all: For then ſhould Britain, and the Britiſh empire, be the beſt and the happieſt that ever exiſted

exiſted upon earth. Let every perſon hear the exhortation of the inſpired Apoſtle, and conſcientiouſly obſerve it. *Submit yourſelves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's ſake; whether it be to the king, as ſupreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are ſent by him for the puniſhment of evil-doers, and for the praiſe of them that do well: For ſo is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men: As free, and not uſing your liberty for a cloke of maliciouſneſs*, 1 Pet. ii. 13—16.

Let us eſteem our excellent Conſtitution, imbibe its ſpirit, and, in our ſeveral ſituations, follow out its deſign. Every good conſtitution, religious and civil, is framed for the happineſs of man, but will be productive of that happineſs in proportion only as men are actuated by its ſpirit and obſerve its laws. Like our mixed government, which comprehends whatever is good in every particular form, ſo our Conſtitution comprehends and combines every part of moral righteouſneſs, piety to God, benevolence to men, and a regard to our own happineſs, temporal and eternal. Theſe, like the ſoul in the human perſon, are the life and ſoul of our excellent Conſtitution: If theſe are preſerved in vigour, the Conſtitution is preſerved; if theſe languiſh, it decays; if theſe ſhould expire, it diſſolves. And, as in the human body, the happineſs of the whole depends on the ſoundneſs of all the parts, and their proper performance of their reſpective functions; ſo to preſerve the ſoundneſs and promote the happineſs of the great body, eccleſiaſtical and political, all the conſtituent members muſt be animated with the ſpirit of true religion and righteouſneſs, and all by a regular and diligent diſcharge of their reſpective offices, muſt co-operate for the general good.

This is the proper return we ſhould make to God for all the bleſſings we receive from him, and the beſt way to have them continued. This is the Grand Reform,

form, a reform that is moſt neceſſary, and without which, no general reform can be effected, or if effected, it would be of ſhort continuance. Much piety and virtue, we truſt, is to be found in this land of profeſſing Chriſtians, and many ſhining examples of them exiſt among all ranks. Yet it is to be regretted, that among the teachers of religion, too many ſeem to be departing from the eſſential doctrines of the goſpel; among the great, too many ſhew little regard to religion, and though the form of godlineſs generally remains, yet the power of it is too generally on the decline. Theſe things call loudly for reformation. If the vital organs of the body are ſound and vigorous, it will live and be happy; if they become weak or faulty, the whole will gradually become diſeaſed and will die. Conſult the word of God, and it will tell you, that *righteouſneſs exalteth a nation, but ſin is a reproach to any people*, Prov. xiv. 34. Look into the hiſtory of the world, and you will ſee this truth verified in every nation and church upon earth, and often, in ſuch a manner, that men might plainly read their ſin in their puniſhment. When the Jews forſook God, they were forſaken of him. When they rejected his Son, they were rejected from being his peculiar people. When the Eaſtern churches generally fell from the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and many denied the ſupreme divinity of its great Author, they were overrun by the arms and impoſture of Mahomet, who denied all the peculiar doctrines of the goſpel, and continue under oppreſſion, by his diſciples, to this preſent time. The deſpotic Monarchs of France had long tyranized over their ſubjects, and their prieſts over the people. Both had long ſupported the corruptions of Popery, and perſecuted the profeſſors of the pure religion of Jeſus. A ſceptical and falſe philoſophy brought from Italy into France in the laſt century, followed the corruptions of Chriſtianity in former ages, and generally infected thoſe in the higher

higher claſſes with infidelity, and ſome of them, with Atheiſm. Want of moral principles and of moral conduct, hath naturally followed the want of religion; and a nation which hath long held itſelf up to the world, as a model of civilization and refinement, is ſunk into ſuch a ſtate of diſorder, licentiouſneſs and cruelty, as would diſgrace the moſt barbarous people. They give us warning. Let us avoid their ſins, if we would avoid their puniſhments. Never let the ſophiſtry of Infidels and Socinians draw us aſide from the true religion of our God and Saviour; nor let the artifices of republicans, ſhake our attachment to our King and Government; but bleſſed with the beſt religion and the beſt of governments, let us ever ſtudy, as in all duty bound, to be the beſt of men and the beſt of ſubjects.

3. As friends to our excellent Conſtitution in Church and State, let us beware of every deſign of its enemies, and tranſmit it ſafe to ſucceeding generations. Religion, liberty and happineſs, are the beſt bleſſings of God to man. Our Conſtitution is founded in them, and formed to preſerve them, from age to age. It was acquired by the virtues of our worthy forefathers, ſealed by many of them with their blood, and has been conveyed to us as the beſt bleſſing they could leave to us. Let us be careful to tranſmit it ſafe and unimpaired to the generation to come. Our Conſtitution and our Government who are the adminiſtrators of it, are our legal guardians, and, under God, our beſt ſecurity for all that is dear to us, our lives, our religion, our liberty, our property, our peace, and our happineſs. Shall we then comply with the evil deſigns of thoſe miſtaken or wicked men, who, contrary to every principle of ſound policy and of juſtice, wiſh to deprive us of theſe invaluable bleſſings. God forbid! forbid it, every true Chriſtian, every true Briton, every friend to true religion and legal liberty, every friend to our gracious King and to

our

our happy country. But why need I ſay ſo! Every true Chriſtian, who knows the value of our religious eſtabliſhment, every true Briton, who has a juſt ſenſe of the excellence of our civil Government, every friend to God and true religion, to our King and our country, will forbid it, and do every thing in his power to preſerve our Conſtitution againſt all its enemies. Thouſands and millions have already declared themſelves publickly, its immoveable friends, and in doing ſo, they have done well. Our great and gracious God, we truſt, will ever effectually forbid it. He has been Britain's God, and Britain's guardian in ages paſt; we hope he will continue to be ſo in thoſe that are to come. He will never forſake us, if we do not forſake him. Four years ago, our whole nation celebrated, with juſt gratitude and praiſe to the Almighty, the centenary anniverſary of the Revolution, which gave our Conſtitution ſuch perfection, and hath procured ſuch unexampled happineſs, to the nation. Let us ever retain the ſame ſpirit of piety and of patriotiſm. Let the Britiſh Conſtitution, which is the admiration and the envy of the world, be the pride and the care of every Briton. Standing on its firm ground, and declaring ourſelves its unalterable friends; let us be ready to guard it againſt all the attacks of its enemies, foreign or domeſtic. And as the beſt way to preſerve our Conſtitution religious and civil, and to enſure the univerſal happineſs it is framed to confer, let the noble maxim given by Solomon to his ſubjects, be engraved deep on the heart of every ſubject of the Britiſh Empire. *Fear God and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change.*

FINIS.

70